



Meet The Team: Anita Gebbie-Deisch

You never know where young pursuits will take you. For Anita Gebbie-Deisch, an interest in rock collecting when she was very young led to a degree in Geological Engineering, and eventually a career with Central Federal Lands as a Park Roads Program Manager.

“I spent most of my childhood collecting rocks, which set my direction early on,” said Anita. “I was born and raised in Colorado, and decided to go to the Colorado School of Mines. Instead of just a geology degree, they deal with the engineering aspect as well, so I got my degree in Geological Engineering, and minored in Civil Engineering. It was all a continuation of something that started pretty young.”

Anita has worked with NPS projects through Central Federal Lands for “about seventeen and a half years.” (But who’s counting?) Prior to coming to CFL, she worked with the USDA Forest Service, stationed first in Sitka, Alaska, and then in Jackson, Mississippi.

Anita Gebbie-Deisch is the Park Roads Program Manager with Central Federal Lands (CFL).



“Just out of college, I met a person who worked with the Forest Service. They put my name into the e-mail system, and interested parties started contacting me.” One offer was for Alaska, a place she’d wanted to work in. She ended up working for three-plus years in Sitka, Alaska.

When it came time for a promotion and a change, there weren’t any openings in Alaska, but a position in Mississippi came open. “I really loved my job in Mississippi, but it’s not what you’d expect,” said Anita. “I think I expected it to be all swamp lands, and it’s not.”

Anita also found that she needed to get used to a completely different set of definitions from those she’d used in Alaska. “Early on, I went out on a site visit with a Ranger, who said, ‘Up yonder beyond that hill...’. And I had to say, okay, you call that a ‘hill?’ Because I would have just called it a ‘bump’.”

Anita spent a total of about 14 years in design. The final two-and-a-half of those years she was the Project Manager of five BIA projects AND a Design Team Leader.

The Forest Service started downsizing in the mid-90s. “I was putting in for everything I could find...government, some private work,” she said. “And then the job at Central Federal Lands came open.” Anita decided it was time to “head home to Denver.”



Anita and family (the four occupants to the right) enjoying the London Eye Ferris wheel

Anita spent a total of about 14 years in design. The final 2.5 of those years she was the Project Manager of five BIA projects *and* a Design Team Leader. She first took this position as a rotational detail for about six months, and then applied for and got the promotion.

In her role as Park Roads Program Manager at CFL, Anita works with the Title 23, FLTP funds and interagency agreements on park jobs. “I track the obligations, and work with project managers to make sure their projects are funded, or partially funded if we’re in a CR.” Anita added that she also participates with several teams from a programming perspective.

Anita said that the biggest challenge with her work at CFL is that it can be very ‘reactive.’ “I’m one of those organized people who always has a prioritized to-do list. But in this job, I have to be way more flexible than just working down through a list. I need to be able to jump from one thing to another very quickly. I’m better at doing that than I thought I’d be, but often I get to the end of the day, and my prioritized to-do list is still sitting there, un-touched.”

Anita said that the job entails a lot of problem solving, and she likes that. “And, it’s quick problem solving, whereas design work is often long-term problem solving, so I like that aspect of the work.”

Anita really enjoyed moving from project-specific work to management. She remembers design work as involving tasks where she often had to “bury my head all day in a project.”

“I really like my current work because I’m a people person, and this job gets me to where I’m dealing with people all the time. That’s what I liked about project management too: the client interaction,” Anita said. “My past work gives me a real appreciation for the individuals involved, an appreciation of where they’re at and why.”

Anita recounted several favorite projects she’s worked on during the past 17 1/2 years. “I liked several of the BIA jobs we were involved with, because on a couple of them I was both designing them and acting as the project manager; on others I was just the project manager.”

The other, more recent, project Anita really enjoyed one was the Wawona Road project in Yosemite. (See related article

on this web site.) “This was a fun, exciting project to be part of,” Anita said. “We delivered a 27-mile-long project in less than a year. I was the lead designer, and also working closely as an assistant PM with the project manager.”

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“We called the field visit the Wawona Death March, because we had to get there and back home in 4 1/2 days, and we walked all 27 miles of the project. It was April, and it was cold!! One day we even had snow flurries.”

The project was designed and ready when ARRA funds became available. “The Wawona project was a really good example of our flexibility at this office,” Anita added.

Anita credits past mentors in both the National Park Service and the Forest Service with some great teaching moments that have helped her in her career. “One person I would call a mentor was one of my first supervisors in Alaska, Brad Beam,” said Anita. “He’d done a lot of civilian work, with the Air Force and so forth. Over the years, if I got in touch with him and asked for advice, he was always very straight with me; he’s a ‘whole picture’ kind of guy.”

“Around Central Federal Lands I’ve also had a couple of supportive project managers who have always been a big part of my learning experience,” Anita said. “Those would be Sam Holder, Pat Flynn, and Bert McCauley. They’ve always been people I could go to, always help I could get — always confidence builders.”

Beyond her work at CFL, Anita enjoys a number of other pursuits and hobbies. “I love volleyball, and I’ve had a camera in my hands since I was about 12 years old,” Anita said. “I have quite a collection of antique cameras. Another hobby is home remodeling and re-decorating, so now my cameras are on display.”

Anita describes herself as “addicted to volunteering.” “I coach volleyball for 5th through 8th grades, and I’m on my 10th year of doing that, she said. “And I’ve just retired from being a Girl Scout leader. I just got my 20-year pin and de-

cided it was time to let that pursuit go, after spending three years as a girl and 17 years as an adult with the program.”

“My family formed the Michael and Cora Betts Legacy Foundation in memory of my niece and nephew who were killed in a car accident five years ago,” said Anita. “I serve on that Board, and run an event—a Ball— through which we raise money for Judi’s House, (where grieving children can meet with support groups and counselors) and I also help with our golf tournament.”

On top of all that, Anita and her husband recently started a new hobby: making wine. Maybe you can request a sample in time for the holidays. You can reach Anita at Central Federal Lands at anita.gebbie-deisch@dot.gov.



Anita and John at the Vatican, Rome